

December 29, 2011

Policy development

Statement of policy

No action is required

This document sets out my humble opinions for a strategy and action plan for supporting UM as a higher education institution to develop and embed best practices into student affairs. It reflects my personal response to UM's need for an institutional student development strategy, and has been developed as a volunteer service to the Student Affairs Office (SAO) at UM.

University of Macau (UM)
institutional strategy
for Student Development
Enhancing UM's commitment to student
success

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Foreword

According to a recent report released by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (2011), the success of students in higher education largely depends on their engagement with the college or university. Student engagement is proportional to an institution's engagement with and commitment to its students. This fundamental principle lies at the heart of all student success initiatives, which in turn are based in attitudes and practices exhibited throughout the institution. Indeed, student affairs, referring to the policies, practices, and programs designed to nurture student success (Kuk & Banning, 2009), serve as a critical link to the quality of the overall educational experience in collegiate institutions. Another term to make sense of student affairs practice, is student development (Rodgers, 1990, p.27) which is perceived as the ways a student grows, progresses, and increases his or her developmental capabilities as a result of enrolment in an institution of higher education. Rodgers notes that student development is also a philosophy that has guided student affairs practice and served as the rationale for specific programs and services since the profession's inception. He actually summed up this philosophy as "concern for the development of the whole person" (p.27), which is quite consistent with UM's belief in reforming our college education.

It is fully recognized that UM's institutional strategy for student development cannot be delivered and devised by a single unit like the Student Affairs Office alone. We have to work closely with our implementation partners, our academic colleagues from different faculties and departments, our stakeholders (students and parents) and the other constituent units like Academic Affairs Office, Alumni Development Office, and our residential colleges. We should seek to learn from and get the best out of joined-up approaches to the exploration of best student development services, working with our university's senior management, to iron out an institutional strategy to nurture student success. Above all, we should put our institution, teachers and learners, at the heart of our strategy, and ensure we review and develop it over our important milestones (such as mid-2013 when we move into our new Hengqin campus), taking account of the real impact we could have made on whole-person (or holistic) student development.

Kam H. Vat, PhD

Volunteer of UM's Student Affairs Initiatives

The beginning of the development of the student affairs profession is marked, in the eyes of some, by the 1937 publication of *The Student Personnel Point of View*, or SPPV (Points of View, 1989), which provided a philosophical foundation for the emergence of a variety of student development theories in the 1960s, to explain why students behave the way they do and to develop programmatic and environmental interventions now common on college campuses, to enrich the undergraduate experiences of students. Among these are the works of Astin (1985, 1993); Pascarella and Terenzini (1991); and Kuh, Douglas, Lund, and Ramin-Gyurnek (1994). This body of literature has yielded solid, empirical evidence for efforts within higher education to emphasize a holistic approach to educating students.

Florence Hamrick, Nancy Evans, and John Schuh

Foundations of Student Affairs Practice (Jossey-Bass, 2002)

Proposed UM's institutional strategy for Student Affairs

To Professor Wei Zhao, Rector
cc Professor Simon SM Ho, Vice Rector (Academic Affairs)

Of interest to those responsible for Holistic Student development

Reference N/A

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Executive summary

Purpose

1. This document drafts out UM's strategy and implementation plan for supporting student success (or development) in the context of elite undergraduate education, including: disciplinary programs, general education programs, undergraduate research programs, and learning-in-communities programs.

Key points

2. SAO (Student Affairs Office) is committed to working with partners to fully embed student development in a sustainable way within the foreseeable milestones of UM's institutional development.

3. This strategy reflects UM's commitment to providing timely and appropriate student development services in support of students' learner-centred education, innovative learning and teaching practices, and opportunities for enhanced (life-long or vocational) training. It sets out the aims, objectives and principles we will adopt, and a draft implementation plan that has to be further developed jointly with the University's student development strategy committee (yet to be formed) under the consultation of the university's senior management.

4. It is proposed to install a division under SAO, and name it "Student Development and Innovation Unit" (SDIU), to be in charge of the related whole-person development initiatives.

Action required

5. This document is for information.

Introduction

6. SAO is committed to working with campus partners on plans to embed student development in higher education in a full and sustainable way. Namely, student development services will be integrated into teaching and learning (curricular), and living and learning (co-curricular) as well as learning-in/through-community-based extra-curricular activities in order to promote whole-person education among both staff and students at UM.

7. SAO is standing firmly by its vision to enhance students' curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular education, through empowering students and teachers to use appropriate educational practices and technologies effectively, creatively, and confidently. In particular, the following UM strategic practices for student development (to foster student success) have been identified (Blimling, Whitt, and Associates, 1999):

- Engage students in active learning
- Help students develop coherent values and ethical standards
- Set and communicate high expectations for student learning
- Use systematic inquiry to improve student and institutional performance
- Use resources effectively to achieve institutional missions and goals
- Forge educational partnerships that advance student learning
- Build supportive and inclusive communities

8. SAO perceives that the key requirement to accomplish the above strategic practices will be the development of capacity for student development within the University. The proposal is to create an operational plan which comprises a team of HSD (holistic student development) personnel to collaborate with departments/faculties and residential colleges (RCs), combined with their envisioning of specific student development plans, central support of certain core technologies and processes, and appropriate HSD initiatives.

University Context

9. Why engage with holistic student development (HSD)? SAO perceives HSD as an undeniable intrinsic foundation for many a student affairs initiative which permeates many a university campus around the globe today, bearing in mind the time-tested Socratic dictum that "the unexamined life is not worth living." HSD, defined as an important core of students' college experience must be facilitated and supported through the appropriate use of ICT (information and communications technologies), at the University of Macau. It can be instantiated as the "putting students first" program amidst many undergraduate educational reform efforts. It is becoming increasingly important in the context of UM's elite undergraduate education system, including increasing student expectation and engagement with technology, responding to a larger and more diverse student body, providing more flexible modes of study to allow for integrative learning among disciplinary, general education, undergraduate research (internships), and learning in community programs, and improving opportunities for enhanced vocational learning, efficiency and increased collaboration, both locally and globally. However, SAO also realizes that successful implementation of HSD initiatives requires a strategic approach to the development of institutional frameworks and policies. It requires change at all levels, including the cultural elements that have been found, based on the international

experiences (say, from many university campuses in the US), to be most difficult aspect of HSD implementation; one which requires leadership, institutional commitment and an adaptable student affairs strategy.

10. Why do we need a student development strategy? A student development strategy is needed to help focus resources including timely infrastructure, staff development and support to nurture students with values and ethical standards that define the *UM college experience*. It is convinced that UM students will be known locally and worldwide for living these values and standards. There are many instances of good practice (especially, in the context of living and learning) around the University, but there is often insufficient support available. The University needs to build capacity and skills to be ready and able to respond quickly to, and benefit from, the fast moving changes of an increasingly networked world, such as how best to make use of emergent social media, such as those available in Sakai OAE (Open Academic Environment), to enhance teaching, learning, assessment, administration and community collaboration, both locally and globally, to lead efforts in engendering loyalty among UM students and alumni.

11. Why does SAO need to install a division called *Student Development and Innovation Unit* (SDIU)? SAO recognizes that UM needs to position itself well. There are many different visions and models for HSD and its implementation, but each institution must devise its strategy to suit its own mission and unique set of circumstances. One example which addresses this complexity comes from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, whose strategic plan for student affairs from 2006 to 2011 has witnessed an innovation framework, which could be used to stimulate discussion and clarify the reason for choosing an appropriate HSD strategy at institutional, faculty, departmental and residential college level that feeds back into further arguments (or rationales) for employing suitable ICT technologies as resources to devise respective HSD plans. SDIU is there to facilitate the engagement of the related academic and/or support units, by extending help to consider the role of technology, pedagogy, and learning objectives when evaluating future (or current) HSD initiatives, so as to enable the respective units to have ownership of the process by different residential colleges, faculties, departments and academics.

12. What do we need to kick off SAO's mission in holistic student development (HSD)? SAO is fully aware of its potential mission to foster and to enhance student success at the University. To execute any HSD strategy, SAO must provide a clear vision and mission statement of student affairs, so that there is greater clarity about the potential aspirations and development of HSD services at UM: The vision is to enable SAO to transform student life successfully, preparing them for citizenship in a global community. Meanwhile, through the effective, creative and confident use of appropriate technologies, our SAO programs and services will attain a pre-eminence that should serve as a model for other universities, for the enhancement of whole-person education experiences. The mission, put it simply, is to transform student lives. We provide quality programs, services, facilities and living-learning environments that create the *UM experience*, which empowers students to achieve the greatest potential in their personal, academic and professional development.

13. What guiding values/principles are needed to support an institutional HSD strategy at UM? SAO is fully aware of a whole-system approach in order to fulfil its mission and achieve any

HSD strategic objectives for UM. In particular, student affairs at UM should subscribe to a set of core beliefs that informs and guides SAO staff members in carrying out their responsibilities and working with colleagues, students, and other constituents. Through words and actions, SAO staff members aspire to serve students and treat students, campus colleagues, and other key constituents with honesty, respect, and civility. Among various values to be upheld and promoted by SAO should include:

- Excellence
- Diversity and inclusiveness
- Risk taking, innovation and the ability to recognize failure as part of the learning process
- Responsibility, accountability and integrity
- Education and development of the whole person
- Life-long learning and achievement

14. Tellingly, SAO will be the leader on campus in student development and student life and will be the primary provider and leader in initiatives and collaborative efforts to create a dynamic learning-and-living environment, to nurture the *UM Experience*.

Strategic Initiatives and Action Plan

In order to meet our vision and fulfil our mission, SAO is committed to tackle squarely some key strategic initiatives (more to come) facing student development at the University:

Initiative #1: HSD at UM should embed students with values and ethical standards that define the *UM Experience*. UM students will be known worldwide for living these values and standards. Working in collaboration with other relevant units at the University (say, RCs, faculties, departments, academic affairs, CTLE), a positive and challenging student environment should be created beyond the classroom that fosters learning as the essential feature of the *UM Experience*. Life management, social relationships, career efficacy, citizenry, and leadership skills should be enhanced to maximize the experience of whole-person education.

Specific Goals:

1. Define the “UM Experience”. Identify what it means to be a UM student who incorporates such values as diversity, vision, altruism, integrity, citizenship, professionalism and leadership in the description (say, a statement of expectations) that becomes widely recognized as a descriptor of a UM graduate. Establish benchmarks and metrics which can serve as guiding principles in this task.

Action Plan

1. Convene a task force including representatives from SAO, Academic Affairs Office (AAO), Centre for Teaching and Learning Enhancement (CTLE), and from various faculties (student-staff consultative representatives) and perhaps students, to define the “UM Experience.”

- a. Establish a definition by Summer-2012.
 - b. Establish benchmarks and method for data collection by Fall-2012
 - c. Establish a schedule for the collection of data by Spring-2013
 - d. Share “UM Experience” throughout the University so that various units and academic departments can begin to incorporate the definition in their activities
2. SAO will work on the adoption of a “UM Creed” (similar to the Carolinian Creed <http://www.sa.sc.edu/creed/>), which will reflect what it means to be part of the UM community.
 3. SAO will incorporate the UM Creed and definition in Convocation programs, Orientation, University Life course and all unit operations, policies and procedures.
 4. All SAO current divisions will evaluate current programs and initiatives to determine how they uniquely contribute to the UM Experience.
 5. All SAO current divisions will provide students the learning, leadership and collaborative opportunities (self-directed activities, event-planning service experiences, and others), which will allow them to experience their own “UM Experience” by Fall-2013.
2. Review and evaluate existing SAO programs and services to determine their responsiveness to student needs and learning outcomes. Typically, SAO primarily assesses the number of services and/or programs (inputs) rather than learning and developmental outcomes (outputs).

Action Plan

1. Establish a task force of critical SAO practitioners and administrators to design and conduct a comprehensive needs assessment of programs and services that should identify baseline and outcome criteria – the student and/or institutional needs and learning outcomes that are or should be fulfilled. This should require a three-step process to be completed by Fall-2012:
 - a. Identify the main current needs – the primary unmet needs and the reasons why the program or service is considered necessary in the first place;
 - b. Describe the nature and extent of the needs being addressed and learning outcomes occurring;
 - c. Integrate task force outcomes into new student orientation programs by 2012 and, where appropriate, all SAO operations, programs and services.
2. Each SAO unit should identify 3 to 5 learning outcomes for its services or programs by Fall-2012, and implement measurement strategies by Fall-2013.
3. Implement the most promising practices, programs, and responsive interventions for educating college students on ethical behaviour.

Action Plan

1. Establish a collaborative working group of members from both Academic Affairs, CTLE and Student Affairs, to develop a set of guiding principles of ethical behaviour for college students by Fall-2012, and start conducting seminars and/or incorporate into University Life course by Fall-2012 to increase knowledge of the guiding principles, and to apply and analyze the principles in the context of the undergraduate "UM Experience".
2. Student Housing (including RCs) should develop and implement community standards to educate residents and staff on the roles and responsibilities for living in a group environment.

Initiative #2: SAO should lead and dedicate more efforts in engendering loyalty among UM students and young alumni.

Specific Goals

1. Create a culture of civic responsibility that articulates the importance that volunteerism, service and leadership have in engendering loyalty, pre-eminence, and the development of private giving to students.

Action Plan

1. Develop a student-run fundraising campaign for some good cause, such as the Indiana University's Student Foundation (<http://iusf.indiana.edu/>).
 2. Implement an SAO assessment plan to determine what factors develop loyalty and what inhibits the development of loyalty.
2. Engage young alumni to return to campus to share their stories regarding career paths and opportunities in the employment community, cultivating an attachment and giving attitude among young alumni who should become givers in the future.

Action Plan

1. SAO career placement unit should invite young alumni to campus to participate in panel discussions and/or presentations for students regarding career paths in various industries or professions, transition to employment, and experiences in graduate study.
 2. SAO should host young alumni events with the partnership from UM's Alumni Development Office, as an important collaboration effort for student development.
3. Increase connectivity of students to the UM campus by creating an enhanced campus-wide buddy system program that includes an upper-class mentor, an alumni mentor, and/or faculty member via some sort of social networks matching people based on interests and compatibility.

Action Plan

1. Collaborate with UM Alumni Development Office to create an online campus-wide social networking system (with the support of ICTO), similar to Facebook or LinkedIn, but tailored to UM needs, allowing connectivity and interaction among students, alumni, faculty and staff.

2. Expand campus-wide student mentoring and coaching efforts with more coordination among SAO units and potential alumni, in regard to specific student development outcomes, such as job shadowing experiences for students with alumni during summer break.

Initiative #3: SAO, as a leader in student development and student life, should provide leadership in the creation of a college experience (the UM Experience) that is supportive yet challenging for students.

Specific Goals

1. Work with Academic Affairs Office (AAO) and CTLE to develop a Campus Learning Centre for academic support (say, tutoring, supplemental instruction, reading/study skills), and for career readiness.

Action Plan

1. Establish a task force from SAO, AAO and CTLE to review and to identify needs and direction. The rationale is to identify changing student needs in a timely manner, and to provide relevant academic services and support programs.
 2. Maintain an environment that values the learning and appreciation resulting from interactions with and recognitions of different students who come from different backgrounds and have different learning needs and developmental characteristics.
2. Assist students from their first semester to graduation in intentional career planning and whole-person development.

Action Plan

1. Introduce a comprehensive four-year servant-leadership program (<http://greenleaf.org>) to engage students in self-development and personal/professional planning.
2. The themes of this program along the four years could be identified as follows:
 - Year 1: Self and Others
 - Year 2: Ethical Servant Leadership
 - Year 3: Global Citizenship
 - Year 4: Legacy for the Common Good
3. The specific student development activities involved in each of the four years' student engagement could comprise the following:

Year 1 participants will:

- Complete a Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® and Strong Interest Inventory® as part of their first-year experience program
- Participate in inventory group assessment as first-year experience
- Begin students' digital portfolios
- Complete some hours of volunteer service
- Reflect on student assessments and volunteer experience in their digital portfolios

Year 2 participants will:

- Begin to focus on larger issues of leadership including ethics, communication, and teamwork. Making connections and building relationships are key focal points during this second year
- Participate in some kind of summer Sophomore Leadership Camp
- Engage in regular discussions with small groups focusing on topics of ethics, critical thinking, diversity, and service projects
- Have opportunity to complete the StrengthsFinder@ assessment in the spring semester if they are interested in applying for some kind of a Peer Educator position
- Begin developing a career plan, including seriously thinking of his or her declared major
- Update reflections and co-curricular experiences sections of their digital portfolios

Year 3 participants will:

- Engage more in their role as Peer Educator (if any), and should be serving others through their active involvement on campus. It is a year with a focus on continuing personal development, while engaging themselves as leaders in a larger community
- Continue service to others through their peer roles, leadership roles or other volunteer experiences
- Update the reflections and co-curricular experiences sections of their digital portfolios

Year 4 participants will:

- Transition into active, engaged, global citizens who are role models of service and leadership within their living-learning communities
- Participate in more frequent (say, monthly) reflections related to their transitions
- Design, implement, and assess a service project for first-year students
- Serve as a mentor during the, say, Sophomore Leadership Camp
- Finalize career plans and steps to find their first professional job or gain entrance to graduate school
- Update reflections and co-curricular experiences sections of their digital portfolios
- Present their legacies to other members of the UM community

Example *Student Development Project*

SAO-SDIU Initiative: Residential College (RC) Reading Club

Assumptions

1. The Residential College System (RCS) at UM is meant to be a four-year interdisciplinary liberal arts program integrating and realizing the vision and mission of an elite undergraduate education, with a unique relevance of General Education (GE), in the emergent context of a research university, emphasizing the quality of teaching and learning.
2. The relevance of GE in our RCS context remains the platform where students and teachers can together reflect on issues of common concerns, issues that are across disciplines that are of concern to humanity and modern society. The goal is to nurture our students to become educated persons in the modern, ever-changing world, with the intellectual and emotional ability and inclination to be able to appreciate and to become a positive force in any situation.
3. The Residential Colleges (RC's) could be characterized as a living-learning community because RC students live and learn in the same physical space. Our RC community encourages and welcomes participation from different members of the UM family, including staff, students, faculty, friends, and alumni.
4. The RC's at UM should have a curriculum (activity-based learning, modelled after Harvard's experience) of their own, which is largely interdisciplinary and engages students in creative exploration of the humanities, the social and the natural sciences, the engineering disciplines, the visual and performing arts, as well as some intensive foreign language study. The goal of the RC curriculum is to foster students' genuine appreciation and lifelong passion for learning, not merely individual quests for knowledge, but preparation and encouragement that lead to effective and responsible engagement in the real world.
5. The RC's at UM should make a unique contribution to higher education, by combining typical residence hall facilities (dorm rooms, lounges, dining halls, recreational rooms, and many others) with the academic and artistic resources required for a liberal arts education (classrooms, creative studios, faculty offices, performance and exhibit spaces, and different types of student support services). Each RC is meant to be a small college community fully integrated with our major public University of Macau. It is guided by a philosophy of participatory education – basically everyone gets involved in our RC's.

Objectives of RC Curriculum

Following the GE model from the Chinese University of Hong Kong, UM's RC curriculum is set to achieve the following objectives:

1. To provide a broad intellectual perspective and to instill an understanding of the values of different academic disciplines;
2. To develop sensitivity to the common concerns of human existence especially from the perspective of Chinese and Western cultures;
3. To help students develop their own judgment and sense of values;

4. To cultivate awareness of the connections among different fields of knowledge; to develop the potentiality for integrating different fields of knowledge as needed;
5. To equip students with life-long learning capacities especially through understanding of the connections between academic pursuits and life experience.

Design Mission of RC Reading Club

The Reading Club is meant to be an activity-based learning embodiment (or instantiation) of our RC curriculum, presumably called *Think, Read, and Write* program. The requirements of this program are to conceive suitable learning activities for RC students to complete, so as to accomplish the above-mentioned objectives of our RC curriculum. In the context of writing the learning outcomes for our students joining the Reading Club, such outcomes must be compliant with the SMART guideline (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SMART_criteria): namely, to be strategic and/or specific, to be measurable, to be attainable, to be relevant/realistic, and to be tangible and/or time-bound.

- **Strategic** – *A strategic activity has a much greater chance of being accomplished*

The mission of our RC Reading Club is not just to provide an opportunity for those of our student residents who are fascinated by books and love reading, to gather, to indulge in their reading hobby, and to participate in regular discussions about books they have read, but also to create a living and learning atmosphere for all of our student residents to experience UM's collegiate community, in close and constant association with one another, and with their tutors, advisors, coaches, and mentors, to experience our pastoral care in a trust and safe environment to grow into an all-round character expected of a college student in an elite undergraduate education environment. So, it is the aim of our RC Reading Club to provide, through thoughtfully designed academic and social activities, an enjoyable opportunity and environment to share with one another, in order to facilitate character development and lifelong learning in each of our RC student residents, to live up to the promise of holistic student development in the UM campus.

- **Specific** – *A specific activity has a much greater chance of being accomplished*

Who: There are reading groups made up of individual RC students (typically 10 per group), who meet in person at regular intervals to discuss a specific topic such as a related book reading experience. Each group is assigned a facilitator played by our volunteer teacher as coach and mentor to probe, to guide, and to steer the course of learning activities.

What: Such gatherings tend to be more personal and intimate since members have the chance to meet often, face-to-face and they usually could develop a strong social and intellectual dimension through mutual sharing. It is mentoring in action, or rather in the terms of pastoral care, shepherding in action, especially when student writing is expected, such as from their own blogs.

Where: Popular places for reading groups to meet include RC meeting or recreational rooms, library discussion rooms, our emergent learning commons, café or even in

restaurants over meals. In practice, they could also meet online through some group e-spaces; that is, not a big problem with our current UM facilities.

Why: In addition, each group tends not to grow too big (not more than 10 persons typically) so, as a member they have more control over the choice of reading matter. Usually, the title for each period (say, two weeks to a month) is voted from a list of suggested titles or the members may each take turns suggesting a book.

When: Typically, twice a month for face-to-face gathering, but unlimited online exchange is always available and plausible, with the setup of some group e-spaces. However, the small size per group also means the views and perspectives involved in the discussion can be a bit limited. This could be compensated by timely bringing in two or more groups with the same title (or book) chosen during the same period since we have about 10 to 15 groups of student residents in each house, if we were to organize our student residents in groups of 10 each for various reading club activities.

How: Two possible modes of operations could be conceived, but the single-title one is much preferred for obvious reason:

Single-Title: This is the most common method, where one title is selected at a time and all members read the same book in the same time frame. They then meet to discuss this book and this method works particularly well for those who like intensive discussion of books. Members are responsible for obtaining their own copy of each period's title, although they can either buy (new or second hand) or borrow from our library. In some instances, if buying a good number of copies of the same title from a book seller, our library could help order them at a negotiated discount.

Multi-Title: In this case, members all read different books at the same time but the same group of books is rotated around the club so that each member reads each title in a serial fashion and ultimately, all members will have experienced each book. When they meet, individual members of the group share their learning and impressions after reading the designated title, and each member picks up something from one another, and each sequence of sharing, adds something new to the sharing of each title among the group. Interactive feedback during each sharing can then be based on how prepared each member has been in leading the book discussion, stimulating the next member who is to read the same title, and returning to the sharing of previous period responding to the sharing of earlier member who read the same title.

In each case, it is highly recommended that individual student keeps a Web blog of what they experience during the reading so as to induce the reading and sharing of their fellow students.

- **Measurable** – *Establish concrete criteria for measuring progress toward the attainment of a specific goal related to certain activities. Ask questions such as how much? How many? How will we know if a goal is accomplished?*

Kick-Off Activity: On checking in each RC student, invite him or her to sign in a form with a specific section called Reading Club Questionnaire (by default, every RC student resident is a member of the Reading Club, as an RC curriculum requirement, with the goal to develop student's Think-Read-Write ability through learning-by-doing).

- Provide a simple survey to do a self-evaluation in proficiency of reading, thinking and writing: Good, Average, and Remedial.
- Provide some categories of reading materials to collect his or her reading favourites: Books, Magazine, Blogs, and many conceivable others.
- Provide a list of books to gather his preferences, say, choose three from a set of books given, in a descending or ascending order of interest.
- Ask specific questions on how much the student would like to see his or her abilities in reading, thinking, and writing improve, to get the most of his or her study at UM. Provide such choices as: strongly, average, not at all.
- Ask specific questions on whether the student is aware that his or her achievement in college is closely related to the ability to think, to read, and to write.

Ask: How many students choose ...? as the beginning of our student profiles (or portfolios).

- **Attainable** – *Goals should challenge students to their best, but they need also be achievable.*

Starting our Reading Club Blog: Today, blogs are inexpensive. In fact, most of the popular blogging services offer free-of-charge hosting to bloggers. So, starting a blog will take very little time, though we should pay attention to the following questions before setting up our blogs in cyberspace:

- *What is the purpose of the blog?* Many existing reading clubs have blogs on the Web with very specific purposes. Some are to review only new books and up-and-coming authors. Other blogs are devoted to talking any and all books, from ancient texts to the most modern rap song lyrics. In the context of our RC Reading Club, our blogs should serve the mission we earlier stated in the beginning. Accordingly, our design and organization, as well as the content, must be consistently in place to live up to the objectives of our RC curriculum.
- *Who will have the ability to post on the blog?* Because the blog is attached to our Reading Club, comprising a community of student residents, we are to allow more than one person to gain entry to the workings of the blog so everyone can post at leisure. To facilitate control of the process, it is possible to install an individual blog for each club member to post his or her own blog, and each reading group is also likely to be assigned a suitable group blog to manage their group activities. This is not a difficult task to accomplish, but requires some organization and setup.
- *Will we allow comments on our blog?* Most blogs today allow visitors to post comments if they are so moved. Indeed, we would like to see our students writing their own blogs and responding to others; so, this is a value proposition from RC's

viewpoint, as some blogs simply are meant to engage our students in discussion, like the group blog to stimulate group members' active writing in blogs.

ICTO, together with SAO, could certainly help create the necessary blogging mechanism to enable our students to get started with Web blogs activities – writing their blogs, expressing themselves through blogging as their journaling activities after reading, preferably on a daily basis. The facilitator must lead the blogging activities by writing their own blogs to be the shepherds of their flocks.

- **Relevant** – *Goals need to pertain directly to the performance challenge being managed. To be realistic, our goals for students to achieve must represent an objective toward which students are both willing and able to work.*

Reading Club Field Trips: Once our reading club is established (on track) and members have gotten to know one another, organizing a field trip can be a wonderful way of enhancing relationships within the club community, and adding another dimension to the discussions. The simplest trip is probably just to have regular meeting at an unusual place, like visiting a cinema to watch an adaptation of a recently-discussed book. This will often provide great fodder for further discussion as members can debate on the accuracy and quality of the adaptation, the suitability of the actors, how well the story translated to the big screen, whether the screenplay did justice to the original, and many others. Or, instead of a movie, we could visit a theatre to watch a play or musical adaptation of a book. Again, this could stimulate much additional discussion and writing, particularly if the story was adapted in an unexpected way, such as the **Tuesdays with Morrie** episodes. Or, we could visit some historical sites as those in Macau, named as cultural assets of our world heritage, and return with students' own story-telling through their blogs.

Reading Club Community-Minded Ideas: As members of our Reading Club get to know one another, it is not uncommon that the club activities may evolve into enjoyable social gatherings. Many students would become keen on the idea of other activities besides book discussions. Group outings and themed nights based on a particular title, are popular alternatives, where we could organize food and music, for some good cause (charity perhaps) to match the book content, such as serving food and music that have significant meaning in the book or are the favourites of the characters or events in the book. We may also surprise our fellow students (those not living in the RC) with our momentum (or gift) of a book that our Reading Club has read and enjoyed, and invite them to join our Reading Club activities, in preparation for their enrolling into our RC house the next school year. Or we could help organize some Reading Enhancement program for our high school community, through mentoring individual high school students to enhance their reading ability, to appreciate and to enjoy reading and learning, through our online facilities.

The key: All such activities must be organized by the students in the reading groups themselves. So, facilitators among the reading groups must help lead the leadership training in each group to organize themselves and to plan and lead such activities. These are all learning-by-doing episodes, and are extremely important to develop students' abilities in creative problem solving, and other skills highly valued by the University.

The requirements: Our reading group facilitators must receive training, too, to serve our students, and to train them to lead themselves. So, programs like *Train-the-Trainer* for *Learn-To-Learn*, among students with *There-is-a-Leader-in-You*, become important.

- **Timely** – *Enough time to achieve the goal: Not much time can definitely affect project performance. A goal should be grounded within a time frame, though. Meanwhile, our goals must be tangible so that our students could experience them with their senses. Tangible goals tend to be specific, measurable and thus attainable.*
 1. Our RCs must provide opportunities for students to integrate the academic mission of UM with a community living environment. Our RC staff should assist students in creating a living and learning environment, conducive to students' understanding of cross-cultural differences, personal and community responsibility, as well as life (or career) planning.
 2. The RC staff should work hard to provide a supportive, involving and safe atmosphere within each residential college. A variety of activities and programs are scheduled during the year within each house to meet social and educational needs of students. Students are encouraged to discuss with the RC staff their ideas about programs and their living environment.
 3. The installation of RC Reading Club is meant to be an important means to meet the social and educational needs of our resident students, especially to bring forth the perceived Reading Club benefits (RC curriculum objectives) as described in the earlier section. Students, after settling down in a specific RC, will be organized into different small groups (preferably comprising 10 students per group, with a specific group structure and identity), known as the Reading Groups. It is estimated that there could be up to about 15 to 20 groups in each RC, and such groups form the specific community of each RC.
 4. Each of the RC reading groups must receive leadership training to manage themselves in terms of our RC living and learning rules (or expectations) of the house, and be assigned a facilitator to advice and coach their living and learning activities. One of the important topics in leadership training is *Learn-to-Learn* (including upfront practice of *Think, Read, and Write*) among our resident students.
 5. All resident students in each RC are invited to participate in this exciting *Learn-to-Learn* opportunity to gain immediate concrete skills, such as identifying one's own strengths and how to utilize that knowledge to begin planning college experience. Through our Reading Club group discussions, individual assessment, and plausible service opportunities, designed into our Reading Groups in the RC, it is expected that students will lay the foundation for involvement as servant leaders at UM and beyond, during and after the four years of living and learning experiences.

6. Each of the reading groups under the Reading Club, is to meet once every two weeks for about two hours, preferably on Friday evening, including (or after) dinner or Saturday morning, including (or before) lunch. The gathering must be informal and family-like, with a simple agenda, to blend social interaction with learning in action through community-based involvement. The atmosphere is largely sharing-based, with information specific enough for the group to work on throughout the fortnight, accommodating the flexibility of group-based, pair-based, and individual involvement. Discussion and sharing of specific themes around the selected works of literature is considered the lead in the two-hour gathering so as not to miss the boat of our reading experience.
7. Each of the reading groups under the Reading Club is to be equipped with an electronic group space, with individual electronic personal space for each group members, to encourage their blog writing, and to facilitate intra-group and subsequent inter-group communications. And the whole Reading Club should also be supported with an electronic portal space to facilitate any community-based announcement and activities. Through the personal e-spaces, students are expected to keep their individual learning portfolios in the form of their own blogs, sharable for others' reading. Such personal blogs are considered as a means to share student living and learning experiences, as an important part of their RC habits of learning. It is through students' blogs that their gains of common reading experience, could be made visible – it is an opportunity to learn to read, to think, to experience and to write – some concrete skills valuable throughout their four years of study and beyond.
8. There must be some kind of leading educational philosophy behind our Reading Club, and the Servant-as-Leader (<http://greenleaf.org>) context could fit right in. The overall Reading Club program together with any subsequent Servant-Leadership Program (comprehensive, four-year long, if any) must strive to develop a capacity and commitment of service and leadership to others. This can only be accomplished by helping students critically reflect on their experiences and sharing those experiences, rather than merely engaging in activities. We might be familiar with the learning pyramid (<http://homepages.gold.ac.uk/polovina/learnpyramid/index.html>) which states that students remember 10% of what they read, 20% of what they hear, 30% of what is demonstrated to them, 50% of what they discuss, and 75% of what they practice. That same pyramid also states that students retain 90% of what they teach others.
9. There must be some electronic portfolios to keep track of individual students' development. Through active engagement, critical reflection and mentoring of others, the Reading Club activities can truly become the fibre of one's character. It is expected that students could retain at least 60% of what they do, 80% of what they do with guided reflection and 90% of what they teach or give to others. This model forms the basis for our RC-GE connection program to truly help students become actively engaged citizens in their local and global communities. Throughout their four years, our RC participants will reflect on their learning opportunities and service experiences through their electronic portfolios. Such reflections will be guided and responded to by peers, faculty and administrative staff (SAO and AAO).

10. If we need any motto to guide the development of our RCS and thus the Reading Club and our subsequent Servant Leadership program if any, the *4D* context could be a timely touch for our GE-RC link: *Determined + Dedicated + Disciplined + Drive*. *The Challenge*: In the first semester of our RC program starting from Fall-2012, it is quite a challenge to accomplish all we expect. Thus, we should really keep a down-to-earth approach to lead the *House Life in Brilliance* program. The key is to build the bridge as we walk on it. We should really take it one day at a time, since this is a trial from our zero-foundation before we could take off in 2013. Fortunately, we have some time to incrementally develop our RCs, but we must be realistic and pragmatic enough to experience and to formatively evaluate this trial operation of our RCS.

The IDEAL Model – What SAO must do along the way!

It is convinced that our RCS represents a whole system change effort in higher education in the history of UM, though such an effort has been experienced in many a research and liberal arts universities in Europe and in North America. To prepare for change and learning from our RC experience, SAO is committed to help along the way. One way to extend our help is to suggest and to put in place a collaborative inquiry process for those of us involved in the RC to get started with our learning how to conduct a continuous improvement program for our RCS.

One likely model is the IDEAL model originally conceived as a life cycle model for software process improvement based on the capability maturity model (CMM) for software at the Software Engineering Institute (SEI) of Carnegie-Mellon University (CMU). The IDEAL model has been found a very helpful model in the change management of many an organization. In particular, the IDEAL model suggests a useable and understandable approach to continuous improvement by outlining the steps required to establish a sustainable improvement program through five different stages of work (<http://www.sei.cmu.edu/library/abstracts/presentations/idealmodelported.cfm>):

1. Initiating (I) is to lay the groundwork for a workable improvement effort
2. Diagnosing (D) is to determine where we are relative to where we want to be
3. Establishing (E) is to plan the specifics of how we will reach our destination
4. Activating (A) is to do the work according to the plan
5. Learning (L) is to learn from the experience and improve our ability to adopt new technologies in the immediate future

Recommendations for Measures of Success

To sum up this document, SAO considers our University to have embedded holistic student development (Blimling, Whitt, & Associates, 1999, pp.14-20; <http://acpa.nche.edu/pgp/principle.htm#inventory>) where:

1. *Good practice in student affairs engages students in active learning*

Active learning invites students to bring their life experiences into the learning process, reflect on their own and others' perspectives as they expand their viewpoints, and apply new understandings to their own lives. Good student affairs practice provides students with opportunities for experimentation through programs focused on engaging students in various learning experiences. These opportunities include experiential learning such as student government; collective decision making on educational issues; field-based learning such as internships; peer instruction; and structured group experiences such as community service, international study, and resident advising.

2. *Good practice in student affairs helps students develop coherent values and ethical standards*

Good student affairs practice provides opportunities for students, faculty, staff, and student affairs educators to demonstrate the values that define a learning community. Effective learning communities are committed to justice, honesty, equality, civility, freedom, dignity, and responsible citizenship. Such communities challenge students to develop meaningful values for a life of learning. Standards espoused by student affairs divisions should reflect the values that bind the campus community to its educational mission.

3. *Good practice in student affairs sets and communicates high expectations for learning*

Student learning is enhanced when expectations for student performance inside and outside the classroom are high, appropriate to students' abilities and aspirations, and consistent with the institution's mission and philosophy. Expectations should address the wide range of student behaviours associated with academic achievement, intellectual and psychosocial development, and individual and community responsibility. Good student affairs divisions systematically describe desired levels of performance to students as well as to practitioners and regularly assess whether their performances are consistent with institutional expectations.

4. *Good practice in student affairs uses systematic inquiry to improve student and institutional performance*

Good practice in student affairs occurs when student affairs educators ask, "What are students learning from our programs and services, and how can their learning be enhanced?" Knowledge of and ability to analyze research about students and their learning are critical components of good student affairs practice. Student affairs educators who are skilled in using assessment methods acquire high-quality information; effective application of this information to practice results in programs and change strategies which improve institutional and student achievement.

5. *Good practice in student affairs uses resources effectively to achieve institutional missions and goals*

Effective student affairs divisions are responsible stewards of their institutions' financial and human resources. They use principles of organizational planning to create and improve learning environments throughout the campus that emphasize institutions' desired educational outcomes for students. Because the most important resources for learning are human resources, good student affairs divisions involve professionals who can translate into practice guiding theories and research from areas such as human development, learning and cognition, communication, leadership, and program design and implementation.

6. *Good practice in student affairs forges educational partnerships that advance student learning*

Good student affairs practice initiates educational partnerships and develops structures that support collaboration. Partners for learning include students, faculty, academic administrators, staff, and others inside and outside the institution. Collaboration involves all aspects of the community in the development and implementation of institutional goals and reminds participants of their common commitment to students and their learning. Relationships forged across departments and divisions demonstrate a healthy institutional approach to learning by fostering inclusiveness, bringing multiple perspectives to bear on problems, and affirming shared educational values.

7. *Good practice in student affairs builds supportive and inclusive communities*

Student learning occurs best in communities that value diversity, promote social responsibility, encourage discussion and debate, recognize accomplishments, and foster a sense of belonging among their members. Good student affairs practice cultivates supportive environments by encouraging connections between students, faculty, and student affairs practitioners. This interweaving of students' academic, interpersonal, and developmental experiences is a critical institutional role for student affairs.

Remarks for Continuing Challenges

Higher education is in the throes of a major transformation at the University of Macau (UM). Forcing this transformation are many initiatives unprecedented in the history of Macau, not just of UM, including UM's immediate relocation to a new campus in Hengqin by 2013, thriving economic conditions in Macau and China over the past decade, rising public awareness of the role of higher education institutions, accountability demands, and demographic shifts of students with more coming from mainland China and elsewhere.

Because of these and other factors, legislators, parents, governing boards (from both inside UM and inside Macau SAR Government), and students, expect UM to emphasize more on quality student learning, personal and professional development as the primary goals of undergraduate education. At UM, we emphasize the importance of whole-person education, referred to as holistic student development (HSD), nurtured under our elite undergraduate education system comprising four essential components of disciplinary education, general

education, undergraduate research (internships) education, and learning-in-community (Residential Colleges) education.

It is SAO's belief that both students and institutional environments should contribute to what students gain from college. The key to enhancing HSD-based student learning and development is not simply for faculty to teach more and better, but also to create conditions that motivate and inspire students to devote time and energy to educationally-purposeful activities, both in and outside the classroom. Student affairs professionals are educators who share responsibility with faculty, academic administrators, other staff, and students themselves for creating the conditions under which students are likely to expend time and energy in educationally-purposeful activities. They endorse talent development as the over-arching goal of undergraduate education; that is, the college experience should raise students' aspirations and contribute to the development of skills and competencies that enable them to live productive, satisfying lives after college. Thus, student affairs programs and services must be designed and managed with specific student learning and personal/professional development outcomes in mind.

The principles of good practice for student affairs as stated in the *Recommendations* section earlier, is intended to guide student affairs practice at UM. Ongoing discussion and action research done on such principles should further develop our understanding of good practice in holistic student development. These principles should not be viewed as an end in themselves, but as a means to our common goal: achieving the educational missions of UM, by focusing on student as "the whole person". This is our commitment based on which our collective educational mission is derived, whose values evident across the history of student affairs works, include: an acceptance and appreciation of individual differences; lifelong learning; education for effective citizenship; student responsibility; ongoing assessment of learning and performance (students' and our own); pluralism and multiculturalism; ethical and reflective student affairs practice; supporting and meeting the needs of students as individuals and in groups; and freedom of expression with civility.

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